

I would like to comment on Docket No. 02-277, the biennial review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. I believe further deregulation of the media industry will be detrimental to our democracy. I am asking you to resist this dangerous trend.

If one of the FCC's goals is promoting vigorous competition, diversity and localism in the media, then the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question and should also give careful consideration to reinstating many of the regulations that were abandoned during the Clinton administration. These regulations ensure that the public interest will at least sometimes be served by the companies which profit from their use of the public airwaves. The regulations justifiably limit the market power of already huge corporations in the broadcast industry.

Media deregulation since 1996 has clearly resulted in less competition, not more. It has allowed giant corporate conglomerates (like Clear Channel) to swallow their smaller competitors and to further consolidate the media industry. While there may be indeed be more television channels than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited. Such a narrowing of perspectives is harmful to our democracy.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from public citizens. It is the American people who will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. It is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest. All Americans are stakeholders in this debate.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, the Commission should take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Sincerely,
Jim Mastro